

In a town full of reports, theirs is unique because it gives a clear outline of just how to execute the administration's original plan for a responsible and orderly redeployment from Iraq. Anyone who questioned the original proposal just needs to listen to those who know what it really means to carry out a military plan.

About the 16-month timeline, retired Army Lieutenant General Robert Gard says, "President Obama's plan to remove combat forces from Iraq is militarily workable and can be executed responsibly."

Echoing what many of us in Congress have been saying for years, retired Air Force Colonel Richard Klass said, "Redeployment of U.S. combat forces should be coupled with a diplomatic surge to help stabilize Iraq."

Mr. Speaker, instead of a residual force of up to 50,000 troops, this plan proposes a workable U.S. redeployment schedule that would result in, first, 100,000 total U.S. troops remaining in Iraq by the end of 2009 and 35,000 to 65,000 support troops remaining in Iraq up until 2010 when the President's 16-month timetable would end, if it is initiated by April 2009, and less than 1,000 troops remaining by December 2011 when the U.S.-Iraqi security agreement mandates that all U.S. forces be out of Iraq.

Not only would this plan redeploy troops and military contractors, but it would ensure that the United States will not have any permanent bases in Iraq. Even though the report comes from former military brass, they readily acknowledge that there is no military solution to the situation in Iraq.

The report calls for a strong diplomatic surge. It goes on to say, "The United States needs to undertake an all-fronts diplomatic initiative to engage the nations of the region to help stabilize Iraq."

The evidence keeps mounting up, Mr. Speaker, and the extended occupation of Iraq is not in the interest of the United States, of the international community or of the Iraqi people. I encourage our military and foreign policy leaders to look closely at this report and to heed the American people. We must redeploy all troops and military contractors from Iraq, and we must do it as soon as possible.

TAKING CARE OF OUR NATION'S VETERANS—LCPL JEREMY SMERUD

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, our Nation has asked many of its military personnel to serve in Iraq and in Afghanistan to fight for freedom and for the protection of the American people. Unfortunately, many of these servicemembers are returning home with symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder—PTSD—and other mental health challenges.

A 2008 study by the RAND Corporation found that nearly 20 percent of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans have symptoms of PTSD or major depression. This study also found that many servicemembers say they do not seek treatment for psychological illnesses because they fear it will harm their careers. If our government and the military fail to address problems associated with PTSD, the situation will only grow worse in future years.

One disturbing example involves Lance Corporal Jeremy Smerud, a marine who is stationed in my district at Camp Lejeune.

Last month, I received a letter from his mother, who is very concerned about how the Marine Corps is treating her son. Mr. Speaker, for the second time, I would like to read the letter from Jeremy's mother:

"My son joined the Marine Corps while still in high school. I remember him as a little boy, looking in awe of his grandfather in his Marine Corps uniform and telling me that was what he was going to be when he grew up.

"Growing up, Jeremy was the son every parent could be proud of. He never got into any trouble in school. He was always there to help with his younger siblings, held a job after school, and was extremely active in the Boy Scouts. He earned his rank of Eagle Scout at the age of 16. Because of his Eagle Scout status, he entered the Marine Corps as a PFC and quickly rose to the rank of sergeant within his first 3 years in the Marines. He was an exemplary marine and an exemplary young man.

"If you review his military records, you can plainly see that Jeremy had no problems with behavior or performance prior to his deployment to Iraq and Afghanistan. He has had a very difficult time readjusting to life after the conflict. He came home to a 'Dear John' letter, has had several friends injured and killed, and has seen more destruction than most of us will in a lifetime. Having no one to turn to for help because of the stigma and the fear of losing his career, he started drinking to self-medicate and to be able to sleep.

"Congressman, do you know what it is like to listen to your once strong son cry like a baby at 3:30 in the morning 3 or 4 times a week because he cannot handle what he has been through? Wanting to kill himself because he doesn't feel he is worthy to live because his brothers were shot? Do you know what it's like to be 1,500 miles away and not have the ability to help him through this, all the while wondering and asking why the Corps he so proudly served and willingly has written him off as worthless and weak and has offered no help to prevent him from faltering further?

"I am so desperately disappointed in the way the Corps has treated my son. My son left the Marine Corps 100 percent intact. He will be leaving the Marine Corps with two feet that are fractured, back and knee problems, de-

creased hearing, decreased vision, and PTSD that will carry a life-long burden for him.

"Yet, according to the Corps, he has disgraced them by his behavior and is no longer worthy. The way I see this, they used him, abused him, now will discard him and find some fresh, young man who isn't tainted, and they will mold him and ask him to sacrifice himself for their cause, and when he is no longer of use to them, they will discard him as well.

"I hope with all my heart the Marine Corps will find the moral courage to do the right thing when it comes to not only Jeremy but all other young men and women who need their help and guidance."

Mr. Speaker, I along with Congressman TOM LATHAM have written the Commandant of the Marine Corps about this marine who is pending Involuntary Administrative Separation due to misconduct. Lance Corporal Smerud's fitness report proved that he was an outstanding marine prior to his deployments. His medical board report states, "His service in the Marine Corps caused his PTSD and indirectly his incidents/legal problems. The Marine Corps' failure to treat him in the past and treat him appropriately has done nothing but worsen the problem."

Mr. Speaker, it will be difficult for this marine to succeed in life if he is administratively separated from the Service. He will not be eligible for TRICARE benefits; he will have difficulty obtaining a job, and it is unlikely that a university will accept him as a student. This is a story of one marine, but this is not an isolated problem. The culture within all branches of Service must change to recognize that PTSD is a real concern that must be addressed.

Mr. Speaker, as I close, I want to say that I have great faith in the Marine Corps and in all of our Services. I ask the Marine Corps to please look into this case and all cases of those who have PTSD. They deserve the love, and they deserve the treatment of this Nation. With that, Mr. Speaker, I ask God to continue to bless our men and women in uniform, to bless the families who have given their loved one in Afghanistan and in Iraq—those who have died—and to bless the wounded, and I ask God to continue to bless America.

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The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mr. TOWNS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. TOWNS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

THREE CUPS OF TEA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. McDERMOTT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

MR. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I just returned from a codel to Iraq and Afghanistan. There's a lot to reflect on after a trip, especially the wisdom in a book entitled "Three Cups of Tea." It relates to our military involvement and misjudgments—first in Iraq and, potentially now, in Afghanistan.

Before I go further, let me say that we cannot do enough to recognize and honor our soldiers and their bravery and dedication and love for our country.

For a few brief moments, we got a taste of what they endure every day. Every member of the codel was equipped with body armor and helmets, and you quickly realize the dangers and stresses our soldiers endure every day. We owe them our gratitude, our support when they return, and the confidence in knowing that our government will only place them in harm's way as a last resort. We failed that responsibility in Iraq, and many are asking whether we may fail again in Afghanistan. We are the most powerful Nation on Earth, but our bullets and bombs cannot penetrate the corridors of history. And the book "Three Cups of Tea" provides a powerful reminder that we must silence the guns if we are to hear the voices of truth coming from history.

Greg Mortenson, who wrote the book, was in Afghanistan and Pakistan on the border. And he there met an Elder who said, "These mountains have been here a long time and so have we. You can't tell the mountains what to do. You must listen to them. So now I'm asking you to listen to me. By the mercy of Almighty Allah, you have done much for our people, and we appreciate it. But now you must do one more thing for me."

Mortenson said, "Anything."

He said, "Sit down. And shut your mouth. You're making everyone crazy."

Then he began to make tea. When the porcelain bowls of hot butter tea were in our hands, Mortenson said the Elder spoke and said, "If you want to thrive in Baltistan, you must respect our ways. The first time you share tea with a Balti, you are a stranger. The second time you take tea, you are an honored guest. The third time you share a cup of tea, you become family, and for our family, we are prepared to do anything, even die."

"Doctor Greg, you must make time to share three cups of tea. We may be uneducated. But we are not stupid. We have lived and survived here for a long time."

"That day, the Elder taught me," says Mortenson, "the most important lesson I've ever learned in my life. We Americans think you have to accomplish everything quickly. We're the country of the thirty-minute power lunch and the two-minute football drills. Our leaders thought their 'shock and awe' campaign would end the war in Iraq before it even started. The elder taught me to share three cups of tea to

slow down and make building relationships as important as building projects.

"He taught me that I had more to learn from the people I work with than I could ever hope to teach them."

There are many nations and languages and religions in the world today, but there is one thing true in all this diversity. Those who do not learn the lessons of history are doomed to repeat them.

After Vietnam, many Americans said it will never happen again. But it has. We were misled into waging a false war in Iraq, and now we are beginning to transfer soldiers from Iraq to Afghanistan. When will we learn?

Russia once and Britain twice believed that the tread of their tanks and the velocity of their shells could flatten the mountains of history in Afghanistan and pave the way for outside control. But the mountains are still standing and history has recorded new chapters which recount and reflect on the folly of nations that believe military power is all powerful. History tells us otherwise. The Iraq war was a mistake, and I fear we may be heading for another quagmire in Afghanistan.

"Three Cups of Tea" is now required reading for everyone in the CIA. It should be required reading for every Member of Congress.

We need to listen to the mountains.

SPENDING IS OUT OF CONTROL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

MR. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, things are happening so fast in this body and the other body and down on 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue at the White House, I don't see how Members of Congress—let alone the American people—can keep up with it.

Let us just take a quick look at what happened in the last 7, 8, 9 weeks. We got the second tranche of the TARP bill. That TARP spending was \$700 billion. People can't get their arms around what \$700 billion is, but \$700 billion to save our economy.

And then the automobile industry had problems. And so we had an auto bailout, first tranche, of \$14 billion. And then we had to have an economic stimulus package because the economy wasn't responding as we wanted it to. So we passed an economic stimulus that was \$787 billion more; and with interest, that was well over a trillion dollars.

And we have an omnibus spending bill that's pending in the Senate right now tonight for \$410 billion. And the President has a budget he's proposing to the Congress for \$3.9 trillion, and \$635 billion of that is the first down payment on a national health care of a socialized medicine approach for helping us with our health care problems in this country.

Now, yesterday, Senator DODD and Senator SHELBY were talking to the

Fed and said, "We want to know where this money's been going." And the Fed said, "We're not going to tell you."

Now, can you imagine the Senate Banking Committee or the House Banking Committee being stonewalled by the Fed saying, "We're not going to tell you where we're spending these trillions of dollars"? And Geithner over at Treasury said he may have to put another \$2 or \$3 trillion into the financial institutions to keep the economy moving.

Now, you go past that and you say, What about taxes on the American people: \$1.6 trillion increase in the budget, and the 2001-2003 tax cuts that we've put in place are going to expire. When those tax cuts expire, that, in essence, is a tax increase. And this is no time for a tax increase.

And the death tax, which we were trying to do away with so we could pass businesses onto the next generation without a huge tax liability that would run them out of business, they're going to do away with the death tax cut.

Now, in addition to that, we have what's called a carbon tax or an energy tax. That's going to be \$646 billion in new taxes that's going to be passed on to the consumer every time they turn on their lights or buy a gallon of gas or use a lump of coal.

Now, they're going to reduce the mortgage deduction. If you've got a house and you've been deducting the mortgage interest on it, they're going to reduce. The administration and the Democrats in this body are going to reduce or try to reduce the amount of tax deductibility on your mortgage interest. And I'm sure that's going to be a reason to buy new houses when you do away with one of the incentives for people by doing away with part of their mortgage deduction interest on interest.

And then for charitable institutions—and this is happening so fast, you can't keep up with it. Charitable institutions—your church, the Salvation Army, the Boy Scouts of America, all of those whom you support and give money to—they want to reduce the tax deductibility for those contributions. Every charitable institution in this country ought to be marching on this Capitol saying, "Hey. Enough. We need those tax deductions so we can encourage people to help us so the burden of helping people in this country doesn't fall completely on the Federal Government."

But sometimes I wonder if this White House and this administration and the Democrats don't want the government to take over everything in a socialistic approach to government.

Now, the 2010 budget would increase the national debt by \$12.3 trillion over the next 10 years, \$12.3 trillion more. And that is more of the debt that's been accumulated since the beginning of the Republic in 1789 until today. That's how fast we're spending this money.